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Congress may attack more strings on aid for Central America

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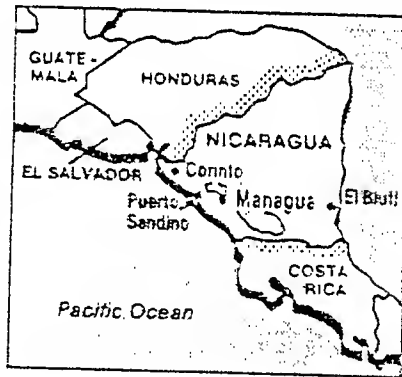
Each additional revelation of CIA involvement in anti-Sandinista activity reduces the chances that congressional ire with the Reagan administration's Central America policies will die down during the Easter recess.

Recent press reports that the CIA supervised attacks by anti-Sandinista rebels on oil installations in the Nicaraguan port of Corinto last October increase the likelihood that congressmen and senators will support an end of aid to anti-Sandinista groups, say congressional Foreign Relations Committee sources.

However, some analysts outside of Congress still believe the Reagan administration could work out a compromise and get at least some money for the anti-Sandinista *contras*.

One of these analysts is Mac Dessler, a senior Fellow at the Institute of International Economics in Washington, D.C. Mr. Dessler, who has a reputation for being one of the sharpest analysts of Congress in Washington, wrote a chapter on Congress and Central America in a study of the region recently published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Dessler believes that recent revelations of the oil facilities attack have hurt the administration badly. He does not, however, feel that Congress is certain to cut off aid to the *contras*. He thinks there are several possible forms of compromise.

One potential compromise concerns the amount of money authorized for the anti-Sandinista fighters. The Senate recently approved \$21 million in aid to the *contras*, but Congress could approve a smaller amount.



Another way to limit such aid and to ensure a measure of congressional control over such activity would be to approve a small aid figure to last perhaps two months and condition further aid on a congressional review of the situation. Such an arrangement could force the administration to consult or at least share information with the House and Senate Intelligence Committees.

Some sort of legal obligation requiring administration to regularly inform Congress on how such money is spent also could be written into the appropriations bill.

Attention has especially focused on this question since the resignation of Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D) of N.Y. as vice-chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Moynihan complained that the Committee was not being kept properly informed.

Dessler says Congress could also impose statutory limits on US involvement

against Nicaragua. For example, it could prohibit mining such as that directed by the CIA against the ports of Corinto, Puerto Sandino, and La Bluff. Specific objectives could also be ruled out. For example, aid could be denied to all actions designed to overthrow the Nicaraguan government.

Dessler believes that the Senate Intelligence Committee would be especially interested in a compromise centering around procedural and information-sharing questions.

In contrast, the House Intelligence Committee would want an agreement fo-

cus on the substance of administration policy, limiting actions that the US could take, he says.

Dessler and other observers point out that the House and Senate intelligence committees have taken different approaches toward the administration. The Senate committee has tried to develop a relationship of trust with the administration and the CIA, and through that reach mutual understandings on appropriate courses of action.

The House Committee has had a more confrontational approach. By asking challenging questions, the House committee has obtained more information than the Senate has on such administration activities as mining Nicaragua's ports, Dessler says.

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